

**SITUATION REPORT NO. 1**  
**INCIDENT NO. 2002-040**  
**DATE: May 17, 2002      TIME: 9:00 a.m.**

**TO:** Governor John Hoeven  
State Capitol  
Bismarck, N.D. 58505

1. NATURE OF DISASTER: Spring Fires Statewide – Dry conditions in areas of high fuel content have contributed to an increased fire potential this spring. State fire management experts note that the average fire size this year is approximately 10 times larger than the 10-year average.
2. DEATHS AND INJURIES: In Kidder County, a Braddock man died on May 2 after suffering severe burns while tending a stubble field fire. The man's brother also sustained burns while trying to rescue him.
3. DAMAGES: Officials for the N.D. Forest Service reported that fire behavior and fire growth this spring have been more intense than in previous years. Data from the past 10 years indicates spring fires average 25 acres in size. Based upon available information, the average size this spring has ranged from 200 to 300 acres.

Current data placed the percent of green statewide at 10 percent, approximately 20 percent below normal for this time of year, according to the National Weather Service (NWS).

Fire Reports:

The first fire reported this year to state fire officials occurred on February 22 near New Leipzig in Grant County, where firefighters battled a 700-acre fire.

Billings County firefighters responded to the Gorham Fire on April 12, two miles north of Fairfield, along U.S. Highway 85. The fire destroyed two outbuildings, 290 acres of National Grasslands and 355 acres of private land.

On April 13, a 360-acre fire was reported near Wilton in Burleigh County, and a 100-acre blaze occurred near Zeeland in McIntosh County.

The largest fire reported to date occurred on April 16 in Grand Forks County, where 5,750 acres burned. Gusty winds pushed the fire from the Manvel Fire District into the Oslo and Gilby Districts. Firefighters were able to contain the 10-mile long fire when it reached U.S. Highway 81. At one point during the fire, the Grand Forks Sheriff's Office activated the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and requested evacuation of people living north of County Road 1 and west of U.S. Highway 81. Officials from the State Fire Marshal's Office reported that the cause has not yet been determined.

Standing Rock Reservation officials reported a 150-acre fire near Fort Yates on April 17.

In eastern McIntosh County, approximately 200 acres of grassland, pasture and Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) land burned on April 20. Farmers and neighbors in the area assisted firefighters.

Three fires occurred on April 23, including 214 acres near Binford in Griggs County, 200 acres near Ashley in McIntosh County, and 600 acres in the Minot Fire Protection District within Ward County.

The May 2 fire in Kidder County killed one person and injured another. It briefly burned out of control; no property damage occurred.

On May 3 in Renville County, firefighters battled a 102-acre fire, most of which was located on the Upper Souris National Wildlife Refuge. A second fire occurred approximately two miles west and one mile north of Mohall. Firefighters believe this field and ditch fire resulted from machinery sparks.

Also on May 3, Walsh County fire departments responded to four separate grass/tree fires. The first fire happened west of Edinburg and burned approximately five acres and a 40 by 80-foot wood Quonset filled with equipment. The fire began in stumps and branches that burned earlier in the week; it apparently was rekindled by high winds. The second fire burned approximately 20 acres of grass and trees one mile south and two miles west of Minto. The third fire started in the Grafton landfill, located two miles south of the city's airport. It burned about 500 acres; local firefighters required mutual aid assistance. The fourth fire occurred south of Grafton along U.S. Highway 81 when a vehicle tire blew out and started a two-acre ditch blaze. These four fires required several hours of response due to high winds and dry conditions.

The State Emergency Operations Center (EOC) received notification from the South Dakota Division of Emergency Management on May 3 that fires near the state line bordering Dickey and Sargent Counties were a potential threat to North Dakota. These fires were contained before advancing into North Dakota.

Also on May 3, 100 acres burned in the Donnybrook Fire Protection District located within northeastern Ward County.

As of May 6, 137 fire starts occurred on the Spirit Lake Nation Reservation and 150 on the Turtle Mountain Band of Chippewa Reservation.

Sparks or hot debris from a train derailment in Cass County on May 10 caused a grass fire one mile east of Tower City. Firefighters contained the blaze to a 500 by 150-foot area. The derailment appears to have resulted from mechanical failure of a car wheel set.

During the morning of May 15, a fire, possibly caused by an unattended campfire, developed one and one half miles west and two miles south of Arvilla in Grand Forks County. The blaze consumed 800 acres consisting of wooded land and CRP grassland. Firefighters remained on scene until late afternoon due to wind gusts up to 32 miles per hour (mph).

#### 4. RESOURCES:

LOCAL: Responders include fire departments, dispatch centers, ambulance services, law enforcement, emergency management and the Kidder County Coroner's Office.

STATE: Agencies monitoring fire conditions and reports include the Governor's Office, State Radio Communications, the State Fire Marshal's Office, North Dakota Highway Patrol, the Division of Emergency Management, North Dakota State Parks and Recreation Department, Department of Transportation (DOT) and the North Dakota National Guard.

FEDERAL: Agencies providing assistance include the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the U.S Forest Service, the National Park Service, the National Weather Service and the Bureau of Forestry/Fire Council, a division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA).

5. VOLUNTEER ACTIONS: Neighbors assisted with the response to fires.

The American Red Cross provided food to firefighters battling the April 16 blaze in Grand Forks County.

6. MAJOR ACTIONS: Local and federal fire departments throughout the state responded to the wildland fires and law enforcement agencies provided fire investigation and traffic control. In Kidder County, the local ambulance service and the Coroner's Office assisted with the response to the May 3 fire.

The N.D. Division of Emergency Management issued a news release regarding the annual spring wildfire season. Residents were urged to check with their local fire departments or local governments for a burning permit and relevant burn restriction information.

The N.D. Rural Fire Mitigation Guide is posted on the N.D. Division of Emergency Management web site: <http://www.state.nd.us/dem/>.

7. ASSISTANCE NEEDED: No assistance is needed at this time.
8. OUTSIDE HELP ON SCENE: Representatives from the Burlington Northern-Sante Fe Railroad responded to the May 10 train derailment and fire near Tower City.
9. OTHER: Appropriate state, local and private entity emergency operations plans and procedures have been implemented.

Situation Reports published by North Dakota Emergency Management are posted on the Division's Internet home page. The address is <http://www.state.nd.us/dem/>.

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Douglas C. Friez, State Director